

# Chogyam Trungpa on Path Without Goal

Compiled by Ravinder Rai.

Merit for the choice of the following quotes goes to the [Dharma Ocean Archives](#). I saved them from “The Quotes of the Week”.

When performing meditation practice one should think of it as just a natural function of everyday life, like eating or breathing, not as a special, formal event to be undertaken with great seriousness and solemnity. One must realize that to meditate is to pass beyond effort, beyond practice, beyond aims and goals, and beyond the dualism of bondage and liberation.

*From “The Way of Maha Ati” by Chogyam Trungpa and Rigdzin Shikpo, in THE COLLECTED WORKS OF CHOGYAM TRUNGPA, Volume One, page 463.*

There’s no need to philosophize your work in order to make it spiritual. It has spiritual bearing anyway. If you regard yourself as a person on the spiritual path, then whatever you do is part of the path, an expression of the path. Decentralization, the absence of ego, the lack of searching for happiness, and not avoiding pain — all of that brings us into the reality of dealing with things directly and thoroughly. Dealing with things in this decentralized, egoless manner is known in the Buddhist tradition as upaya, or skillful means. Without that, there is no means of discovering the inner guru, or inner teacher, as one might call it, which is the constant instruction that you begin to receive on the path. The daily living situation becomes the teaching; it becomes a constant learning process. There’s no way of developing that sense of inner teacher if you fail to relate with daily living situations directly, because without that, there’s no interchange with your world.

*From “Meditation and Daily Life,” Chapter Two in /Work, Sex, and Money: Real Life on the Path of Mindfulness/ Edited by Carolyn Rose Gimian and Sherab Chodzin Kohn.*

Student: I was wondering also why there seems to be such an overabundance of spiritual materialism in the West.

Chogyam Trungpa: Well, the Western mind operates in terms of achievement. If you are a climber of mountains, a mountaineer, you don’t just climb, you climb in order to get some reward, break a record, make world history, or whatever. So even if the search is supposedly a pleasurable one, still there is meaning behind it. You must be doing something always. You must be. You must not be idle. The same thing applies even if we are meditating. We try to prove to ourselves that we are not being idle, but we are productive people whether we meditate or not. We meditate in order to be more productive! [Laughter.] That kind of relation goes on always. So it’s a natural tendency — losing grip is socially, economically something that we don’t want to face.

*From GLIMPSES OF SHUNYATA pp 67-68, and in THE COLLECTED WORKS OF CHOGYAM TRUNGPA, Volume Two, p. 367.*

The third noble truth that the Buddha taught is the truth of cessation. The truth of cessation (gokpa) is related to the concept of tharpa, or “liberation.” In discussing the possibility of cessation, we should get rid of fictitious stories about how great it is to get there and become somebody at last. Such ideas may be obstacles. In relating to cessation, the question is whether we have to use our imagination or whether we actually can experience a sense of relief or freedom. The truth of the matter is, that in regard to cessation, imagination does not play a very

important role. It does not help at all in getting results. The experience of cessation is very personal and very real, like the practice of meditation. Generally, however, our experiences of freedom or liberation are quite sparse and minute — and when we do have an occasional glimpse of freedom, we try to catch it, so we lose it. But it is possible to extend such glimpses.

*From “Awakening and Blossoming,” in THE TRUTH OF SUFFERING: and the Path of Liberation.*

Understanding suffering is very important. The practice of meditation is designed not to develop pleasure but to understand the truth of suffering; and in order to understand the truth of suffering, one also has to understand the truth of awareness. When true awareness takes place, suffering does not exist. Through awareness, suffering is somewhat changed in its perspective. It is not necessarily that you do not suffer, but the haunting quality that fundamentally you are in trouble is removed. It is like removing a splinter. It might hurt, and you might still feel pain, but the basic cause of that pain, the ego, has been removed.

*From Chapter Three, “The Power of Flickering Thoughts,” in THE TRUTH OF SUFFERING AND THE PATH OF LIBERATION*

The mind is like a crazy monkey, which leaps about and never stays in one place. It is completely restless and constantly paranoid about its surroundings. The training, or the meditation practice, is a way to catch the monkey, to begin with. That is the starting point. Traditionally, this training is called shamatha in Sanskrit, or shi-ne in Tibetan, which means simply “the development of peace.” When we talk about the development of peace, we are not talking about cultivating a peaceful state, as such, but about simplicity.

*From “Trapping the Monkey” in THE TEACUP AND THE SKULLCUP: CHOGYAM TRUNGPA ON ZEN AND TANTRA. Page 72.*

Developing basic sanity is a process of working on ourselves in which the path itself rather than the attainment of a goal becomes the working basis. The path itself is what constantly inspires us, rather than, in the style of the carrot and the donkey, promises about certain achievements that lie ahead of us.... The difference between spiritual materialism and transcending spiritual materialism is that, in spiritual materialism, promises are used like a carrot held in front of a donkey, luring him into all kinds of journeys. In transcending spiritual materialism, there is no goal. The goal exists in every moment of our life situation, in every moment of our spiritual journey. In this way, the spiritual journey becomes as exciting and as beautiful as if we were buddha already. There are constant new discoveries, constant messages, and constant warnings. There is also constant cutting down, constant painful lessons — as well as pleasurable ones. The spiritual journey of transcending spiritual materialism is a complete journey rather than one that is dependent on an external goal.

*From “The Trikaya,” in CRAZY WISDOM page 15.*

Question: It says in the [United States] Constitution that every person has his own inalienable right. Every person is good and has his right to exist, right to be....What would you say to that?  
Chogyam Trungpa: They achieved quite a lot. They have actually accomplished the present situation of freedom, equality, whatever we have, but at the same time, there are some problems. Those problems are the neurosis of being unable to relate with NOW. We have salesmen with brief cases selling something or other, going all over the earth trying to sell their merchandise, their products. They have to maintain themselves, and they have two possibilities: either they can sell superior merchandise, or else they have to fake it. That goes for everything. It actually goes as far as the presidential situation, and if WE are faking, then we are left with no Buddhism at

all. In that case, Buddhism cannot be egoless or gentle any longer. We are stuck with aggression, if we are talking somebody into something.

*From the 1979 Kalapa Assembly Talks, an unpublished transcript.*

The practice of meditation is largely based on some kind of sacrifice and openness. Such sacrifice is necessary and has to be personally experienced. Ordinarily, we might sacrifice something for the sake of developing goodness, or because we are willing to suffer on behalf of humanity. However, the sacrifice that has been recommended in the Buddhist tradition is to sacrifice something without any purpose....Sacrificing something without a purpose is outrageous and precisely heroic and fantastic; it is very beautiful. The practice of meditation is sacrifice and openness without techniques, without means, without gloves, pliers or hammers. You have to use your bare hands, bare feet, bare head, to relate with the whole thing.

*From "Is Meditation Therapy?" in THE SANITY WE ARE BORN WITH, from pages 183-184.*

Obviously, we must think first before we do. But the question is more complex: how to think, what to think, why to think, what is "to think"? No one can stop or control your thought process or your thinking. You can think anything you want. But that doesn't seem to be the point. The thinking process has to be directed into a certain approach. That does not mean that your thinking process should be in accord with certain dogma, philosophy, or concepts. Instead, one has to know the thinker itself. So we are back to square one, the thinker itself: who or what thinks and what is the thought process?... At this point the only genuine ground we have is back to square one. If you cut all kinds of roots and fascinations, all kinds of entertainment, regarding it as a very subtle form of conmanship, what do you have? You might say nothing. But it's not quite nothing — it's back to square one. The point is that your genuine existence and expressions should not be colored by any form of artificiality. However subtle, however magnificent, however beautiful or holy it may be, it still discolors your existence. So if you have a sense of ultimate cynicism, you are back to square one. If you see through any trips that are laid on you, or anyone trying to influence you, if you see through how you yourself are influencing somebody else's ideas or borrowing ideas and concepts from somebody else — then you are back to square one.

*From "Back to Square One" in DHARMA ART; or Vol 7 of THE COLLECTED WORKS OF CHOGYAM TRUNGPA, pages 149-153.*

A lot of us feel attacked by our own aggression and by our own misery and pain. But none of that particularly presents an obstacle to creating enlightened society. What we need, to begin with, is to develop kindness toward ourselves and then to develop kindness toward others. It sounds very simpleminded, which it is. At the same time, it is VERY difficult to practice. Pain causes a lot of chaos and resentment, and we have to overcome that. It is an extremely simple logic. Once we can overcome pain, we discover intrinsic joy, and we have less resentment toward the world and ourselves. By being here, naturally being here, we have less resentment. Resentment is not being here. We are somewhere else, because we are preoccupied with something else. When we are here, we are simply here — without resentment and without preoccupation. And by being here, we become cheerful. Let me see you smile. That's it! Good luck.

*From "A Question of Heart" in Great Eastern Sun: The Wisdom of Shambhala, pages 191-192.*

The practice of meditation presents itself as an especially powerful discipline for the shrinking [modern] world....The age of technology would like also to produce a spiritual gadgetry — a new improved spirituality guaranteed to bring quick results. Charlatans manufacture their

versions of the dharma, advertising miraculous, easy ways, rather than the steady and demanding personal journey which has always been essential to genuine spiritual practice.

*From the Foreword to Living Dharma in THE COLLECTED WORKS OF CHOGYAM TRUNGPA, Volume Three, page 575*

In mindfulness practice there is no goal, no journey; you are just mindful of what is happening there. There is no promise of love and light or visions of any kind — no angels, no devils.

Nothing happens: it is absolutely boring. Sometimes you feel silly. One often asks the question: “Who is kidding whom? Am I on to something or not?” You are not on to something. Travelling the path means you get off everything; there is no place to perch. Sit and feel your breath; be with it... Boredom is important because boredom is anti-credential. Credentials are entertaining, always bringing you something new, something lively, something fantastic, all kinds of solutions. When you take away the idea of credentials, there is boredom.

*From “Boredom” in THE MYTH OF FREEDOM AND THE WAY OF MEDITATION, page 53.*

Actual meditation practice is a constant act of freedom in the sense of being without expectation, without a particular goal, aim, and object. But as you practice meditation, as you go along with the technique, you begin to discover your present state of being. That is, we could almost say, a by-product of meditation.

*From TRANSCENDING MADNESS: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE SIX BARDOS edited by Judith Lief, page 42.*